

OLD FORT ROSALIE GIFT SHOP  
(Fat Mama's Tamales)  
Natchez National Historical Park  
500 South Canal Street  
Natchez  
Adams County  
Mississippi

HABS MS-274  
MS-274

HABS  
MS-274

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### OLD FORT ROSALIE GIFT SHOP (Fat Mama's Tamales)

HABS No. MS-274

Location: 500 South Canal Street, in Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi.

Present Owner,  
Occupant, Use: The National Park Service, specifically Natchez National Historical Park, owns the property. The building is occupied by a well-known, local restaurant, *Fat Mama's Tamales*, which is owned and operated by Jimmy and Britton Gammil. Fat Mama's has been mixing up margaritas and serving hot tamales since 1989.<sup>1</sup>

Significance: Although not initially envisioned as a restaurant, the plan for the building was always tied to the tourist trade. It served as the gift shop and visitors' entrance for Jefferson Davis Dickson's 1940-41 reconstruction of the eighteenth-century, French fort called Rosalie. The entry, paired as it was with a merchandising endeavor, necessarily pandered to the public. It was situated on Canal Street to accommodate the increased automobile traffic heading through town toward the newly constructed Natchez-Vidalia (Louisiana) Bridge. It also took the form of a log cabin, an architectural choice intended both to catch the attention of the passers-by and to be an authentic reproduction.

Dickson's replica of Fort Rosalie was located just as the original French fort was, on the bluff, behind what is now Canal Street, and high above the Mississippi River. The twentieth-century interpretation of the fort included features such as a stockade and double stockade, storehouse, chapel, barracks and officers quarters, Commander's headquarters and bedroom, Council room, powder magazine, observation tower, blacksmith shop, guard house, kitchen and mess hall, and parade grounds, in addition to the entrance building at 500 South Canal Street. All of the buildings and rooms, moreover, were furnished.<sup>2</sup> Of these, eight structures in addition to

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<sup>1</sup>Regarding current occupants' tenure, Tommy Jones to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, 25 May 2006. For more information on Natchez National Historical Park, see [www.nps.gov/natc](http://www.nps.gov/natc).

<sup>2</sup>Un-dated promotional material urging, "visit the complete replica of historical Fort Rosalie," Private Collection, Historic Natchez Foundation.

the entrance and gift shop building are marked on the Sanborn map that was updated beginning in the mid-1940s and finished in August of 1950.<sup>3</sup>

Dickson's reconstruction of Fort Rosalie resembled other, larger-scale preservation and restoration efforts occurring elsewhere in the country, notably Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, John D. Rockefeller and W.A.R. Goodwin's Colonial Williamsburg, Henry Francis DuPont's Winterthur, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Flynt's Historic Deerfield, and the Wells Historical Museum (Old Sturbridge Village). These men sought to preserve remnants of the past, specifically the colonial era, and, at times, chose to recreate that past or their vision of it. The places they shaped also were intended to present a history lesson, if only as a reminder of what was.<sup>4</sup> Dickson capitalized on this trend toward preservation and history education, a movement that gained momentum in the National Park Service during the 1930s and guided work at privately-owned historic sites. Dickson's version of the French fort was built in a manner identifiable with the pioneer, the frontier, and the conquering of the American west.<sup>5</sup> It was an irresistible lure, for the showman with a fondness for his birthplace and for those tourists out to "see America first."

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History

#### 1. Date of erection: 1940-41.

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<sup>3</sup>Sanborn Map Company, June 1925/August 1950, sheet 23 (Library of Congress and Historic Natchez Foundation).

<sup>4</sup>Marianne Berger Woods, "Viewing Colonial America through the Lens of Wallace Nutting," *American Art* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 69-70; William B. Rhoads, "Roadside Colonial: Early American Design for the Automobile Age, 1900-1940," *Winterthur Portfolio* 21, nos. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1986): 137-40.

<sup>5</sup>"The National Park Service and Preservation," *Public Historian* special issue 9, no. 2 (Spring 1987); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), chap. 7; Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1984), 164-80; Michael Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (NY: Vintage Books, 1993), part 3, especially 465-73.

The fort opened to the public on 16 February 1941.<sup>6</sup> Ever the promoter, Dickson accompanied by a reporter W.A. Sullivan, Jr., "brought the bright blade of his new axe down in a hissing arc. Then he straightened up and looked at his workmanship critically [...] and handed the axe to his foreman. 'That's the way I want 'em notched,' he said." Dickson was "out to work a miracle in Natchez with plain tree trunks" and oversaw the "cutting and shaping of 1,000,000 feet of untrimmed pine logs." He planned to assemble Fort Rosalie in a morning, sometime in February beginning in the moonlit hours of the day. The fort was to consist of nine log cabins. Each were made at a different workshop, which were each located somewhere in Adams and Franklin counties; at yet another, the logs for the stockade were trimmed. Rustic furnishings were crafted.

Although the newspaper did not specify where it was made, the furniture was intended to be authentic to the period and, in a gesture to the frontier setting and era, fastened with wood pegs. The materials for the buildings were to be hauled to the site in fifty trucks. Work was to proceed quickly so that as if by magic, or miracle, the ramparts of Fort Rosalie would stand again and the Fleur de Lis would float from the rustic, pine flagstaff. Dickson admitted the work of the reconstruction was in the details, that gathering the props and conducting the necessary research took the most effort.<sup>7</sup>

Upon completion, the newspaper recommended visiting the fort because "it recreate[d] an interesting episode in American life." It also described the lay-out of the fort. Once inside, there were platforms immediately to the right. These abutted the walls and provided footing to the soldiers as they fired guns through the portals. The log cabins, in sequence, were the storage facility for furs and other valuables; the gun-room and adjacent quarters furnished with "long, table-like structures" as bunks; the powder room, partially submerged and covered with dirt and grass to obscure it from the enemy; the Chapel; the commander's headquarters which consisted of a chamber and council room; the observation tower; and on the left side, the three remaining log cabins stood. These were the barely-lit jail replete with chains secured to the walls; the "smithy"; and kitchen supplied with a large, iron kettle and a long table and low, small chairs. Canons were placed in the middle of the fort.<sup>8</sup> By 1972 only two of these log buildings survived and

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<sup>6</sup>"Throngs Visited Fort Rosalie on Opening Sunday," *Natchez Democrat* (18 February 1941), 8; "Fort Rosalie Restored by Jeff Dickson Will Be Formally Opened to Public Today," *Natchez Democrat* (16 February 1941); advertisement, *Natchez Democrat* (16 February 1941).

<sup>7</sup>"Moonlight Miracle Promised in Resurrection of Ft. Rosalie," *Natchez Democrat* Sunday morning (8 December 1940), 1.

<sup>8</sup>"Fort Rosalie," *Natchez Democrat* (23 March 1941), 5.

they in ruinous condition.<sup>9</sup> Today, as it was when Dickson first saw it, Fort Rosalie is again an archaeological site excepting the gift shop/entrance on Canal Street.

2. Architect: The architect or designer of the Fort Rosalie reconstruction project remains unknown at this writing. The vision for the site was, of course, that of Jefferson Davis Dickson (1896-1943). Early in the planning stages for Fort Rosalie, the *Natchez Democrat* reported on Dickson's interest in Natchez's history. The newspaper relayed Dickson's intentions to call upon his connections in the French ministry and to invite archaeologists from the Smithsonian to participate in the project.<sup>10</sup> It remains unknown at this time who advised Dickson on the archaeological evidence for the fort itself or on appropriate use of decorative arts for the interiors.

For the opening of the reconstructed fort in February of 1941, the *Natchez Democrat* revealed a few details regarding the conception or inspiration for its appearance. Dickson had the New York artist John Sloan (1871-1951) draw the blueprints. He visited the "reconstructed pioneer forts at Niagara, Ticonderoga, Quebec, Montreal, Banff and Lake Louise." Those models, plus some "documents belonging to the Smithsonian Institute and diaries of ten French governors of the Natchez territory, have furnished [Dickson] with a vivid mental picture of Fort Rosalie as it stood in 1729."<sup>11</sup>

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:

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<sup>9</sup>"Natchez Bluffs and Under the Hill District," Nomination, 1972, National Register of Historic Places.

<sup>10</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (24 January 1940), 6, 8; *Natchez Democrat* (5 April 1940), references the French ambassador being called upon to dedicate the site; and *Natchez Democrat* (10 May 1940), makes reference to the Smithsonian Institution. The opening text of a partial, and undated, newspaper clipping suggests Dickson did recruit out-of-town guests for the unveiling of the fort. "Throngs Visited Fort Rosalie on Opening Sunday," clipping, n.d., private collection, Historic Natchez Foundation. This clipping is likely taken from the *Natchez Democrat* (18 February 1941), 8.

<sup>11</sup>"Moonlight Miracle Promised in Resurrection of Ft. Rosalie," *Natchez Democrat* Sunday morning (8 December 1940), 1; "Fort Rosalie Restored by Jeff Dickson Will Be Formally Opened to Public Today," *Natchez Democrat* (16 February 1941), 1, 3. The newspaper credited Sloan with the design of New York's Grand Central Station and the Graybar building. Sloan was from Philadelphia, and taught at the Academy of Fine Arts before moving to New York. It is possible, then, that Dickson's in-laws provided the introduction.

a. Ownership: Ownership of the parcel, in the western European understanding of the term, that Jefferson Davis Dickson bought from Harry and Cleo Rosenthal in 1940<sup>12</sup> began as government land in the eighteenth century when the French re-established Fort Rosalie around 1730. This, the second incarnation of the fort, was a pentagon-shaped earthwork and was constructed near the site of Governor Jean Baptiste le Moyne de Bienville's 1716 military and trading post. Bienville's fortifications or what was the initial Fort Rosalie consisted of a rectangular palisade.<sup>13</sup> The palisaded enclosure lasted from 1716 until the 1729 quarrel with the Natchez Native American tribe escalated into a brief and cataclysmic exchange of hostilities, destroying the fort and the tribe entirely. In 1763, at the conclusion of what is known as the Seven Years War, Natchez was forfeited by the French to the British. Fort Rosalie was refurbished, and renamed Fort Panmure at this juncture.<sup>14</sup>

Spain declared war on Great Britain in June of 1779 and shortly thereafter Spanish forces, led by Governor Bernardo de Galvez, left New Orleans to challenge the British at their outposts along the Mississippi and soon reached Baton Rouge. The fortifications fell to the Spanish, who negotiated for the surrender of the fort at Natchez as well as that in

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<sup>12</sup>Adams County Deed Book, 5-A, 144-45.

<sup>13</sup>Jack D. Elliott, Jr., "The Fort of Natchez and the Colonial Origins of Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 52, no. 3 (1990): 160-61, 166-74; and Robert S. Neitzel, "The Grand Village of the Natchez Revisited," *Archaeological Report 12* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1983), including reproductions of three historic maps: [Fort Rosalie landscape] "French concessions of Terre Blanche and St. Catherine, and the Natchez Grand Village," ca. 1730, *Ministre de la Guerre, Musee de Armee, Archives des Cartes, Paris*; "Carte de Natchez" [showing Fort Rosalie, the Terre Blanche and St. Catherine concessions, and the Grand Village of Natchez], ca. 1730, *Archives Nationales, Paris*; [Military map showing Grand Village mound-plaza complex, French siege trenches, and Natchez forts on either side of St. Catherine Creek], *Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris*.

<sup>14</sup>*The Mississippi Territorial Session Laws of May 1802*, ed. Douglas C. McMurtie (Chicago: John Calhoun Club, 1938), recounts the acts of the third session of the first general assembly that established Jefferson College. Although other instruments of government are set-up during this session, no reference is made to the fort or to a sale into private ownership. Similarly, letters from Claiborne regarding the Natchez district in 1802 relay concerns about trade primarily and the DeGrange Index to letters of the Corps of Engineers mention Natchez around the time of the establishment of a military hospital in 1848. Record Group 77, Records of the Chief of Engineers (M1703) and Register of Letters Received, Secretary of War 1800-70, Vol. I: 11 November 1800-31 December 1802 (M22), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. References to Fort Panmure consist only of its inclusion in the index of forts. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of U.S. Army 1789-1903*. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903, 531. See also, Robert B. Roberts, *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts: The Military, Pioneer, and Trading Posts of the United States*. NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988, 449-51.

Baton Rouge. The terms most likely were due to the position of the Natchez fort high on the bluffs, a position more difficult to capture than those of Baton Rouge. Spanish forces reached Natchez and the fort surrendered to Spain in October. In 1781 the British, briefly, re-occupied the fort; however, by the end of the American Revolution, the Spanish controlled the lower Mississippi Valley. They continued to use the name Fort Panmure, although most called the site fort of the Natchez or the fort at Natchez. While most of their subjects were of English and French descent, the Spanish platted the town of Natchez in 1788, re-surveyed it in 1791, and established another defensive post, Los Nogales, to ward off the Americans. Tensions between the Americans and the Spanish over the claims to land north of the 31<sup>st</sup> parallel east of the Mississippi eventually led to a Spanish withdrawal from the entire Natchez District.<sup>15</sup>

The Americans assumed the Mississippi Territory (1798-1817) from the Spanish (1783-98), maintaining the Natchez District largely as they found it. The same cannot be said of the fort. In 1799 Fort Adams was established nearby and Brigadier General James Wilkinson took to calling the Americans' 1798 Natchez Post "Fort Sargent" after Winthrop Sargent, the territory's first governor. The appellation was not official and the post only intermittently occupied.<sup>16</sup> Natchez was more of a strategic trading center than a defensive position to the Americans at the dawn of the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Elliott, 160-61, 185-93.

<sup>16</sup>Regarding the name "Fort Sargent" for the Americans' trading post, it also has been associated with Fort Panmure by historians familiar with Natchez history. See, for example, Ann Beha and Associates, Inc., "Natchez National Historical Park, Historic Resource Study," (1996), 23, who cites, Mary W. Miller, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation," military section, "Fort Rosalie."

<sup>17</sup>The *U.S. Statutes at Large* covering the first decade of the nineteenth century, as well as the *Journals* of the House and Senate, contain references to the sale of public lands in the territories to private individuals, specifically that the initial offering be for three weeks. Afterwards, no public auction needed to be held; private transfers could be enacted. Natchez is mentioned in the *Statutes* for the Ninth Congress in 1806 regarding the disposal of lands in the United States south of Tennessee settling rights of preemption, compensation of the [land] commissioners, patents, and the rights of the U.S. to "all the land lying between the front street of the city of Natchez and the Mississippi River, and bounded on the north by north Fourth Street, and the land granted to Stephen Minor, and on the south, by the lands annexed to the old fort, and those granted to William Barland, ... provided, that the said land, as above described, be neither cultivated nor occupied by buildings, but that it be planted with trees, and preserved as a common, for the use, comfort, and health of the inhabitants of the city..." *Statutes at Large*, 21 April 1806, II: 51, 400-01. Earlier acts reference Jefferson College, land surveys, providing for the sale of territorial lands, establishment of a land office, and so on. Specific reference to Brigadier General Wilkinson's order to Francis Jones, the Assistant Quartermaster of the Western Army, "to sell at public vendure the public buildings belonging to the United States and attached to the fort" remain unaccounted for, as is the reputed 1801 act of Congress authorizing said sale.

Congress established the Mississippi Territory (1798-1817) three years after the treaty with the Spanish settled the boundary with the United States essentially ceding Alabama and Mississippi to the Americans. The territorial governor, Sargent, outlined what would become Adams County the following year, in 1799. Settlement progressed and trade flourished, but the condition of the fort declined after federal troops pulled out in March of 1800. By 1805 it was largely a ruin. The Common Council requested of the governor that they be allowed to move the blockhouse to public land in town for use as a jail. Governor Williams, however, "ordered the 'old blockhouse' [of Fort Panmure] to be torn down and the timber sold, November 1805."<sup>18</sup>

Potentially more illuminating than the cursory summary of military transfers is the discussion of Rosalie, the house, with specific reference to the deed transferring the land on which the dwelling would be erected. In the *Natchez Democrat's* 1940 Pilgrimage edition, the section about Rosalie referred to an 1801 act of Congress, to an order from Brigadier General Wilkinson to Francis Jones, the Assistant Quartermaster of the Western Army, and to Josias McComas's certificate of ownership on file in the Register of the Land Office.<sup>19</sup> While these primary sources remained elusive, it is recognized that sometime before 1800 Henry Willis patented 21 and 84/100 acres. On 15 November 1820, Josias H. McComas, husband of Willis's widow, sold the 21-acre tract to Gamaliel Pease who then flipped the parcel to Peter Little in December. Little ran a sawmill and had the house built. It was not until 1821, however, that Willis's heirs confirmed the patent from the United States.<sup>20</sup>

Coming full circle, the tract passed back into public ownership in 1995. At this time, the United States government bought the land for the National Park Service, but Jimmy and Britton Gammil remained as tenants on tract 102-03, running *Fat Mama's Tamales* per the terms of their lease with Biglane Investments.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Elliott, 192-96; Dunbar Rowland, ed. *Mississippi*. (Atlanta: Southern Historical Publishing Association, 1907), I: xiii, 23, 25, 737. Rowland's compilation of Mississippi history is repeated in Pearl Vivian Guyton, *The Story of Rosalie: D.A.R. State Shrine, Natchez, Mississippi* (Jackson: for the author by Hederman Brothers, 1941): 44-49.

<sup>19</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (Pilgrimage Edition, 1940), 6.

<sup>20</sup>Guyton, 20; Elliott, 194-95, note 83, who cites Lowry, ed., *Letters of Looe and Eliza Baker*, 52; Natchez Common Council Minute Book, 18 January 1806. (Natchez Historical Foundation, microfilm).

<sup>21</sup>Field Solicitor, Knoxville Field Office, Southeast Region, to Chief, Land Resources Program Center, Southeast Region, n.d., *United States of America v. [owners and claimants for 1.37 acres of land, more or less, known as tract 102-03, tract 102-05, and tract 102-09]*, 12 April 2006.

b. Chain of title: The specific deed references are as follows:

Plat of Stietenroth Lot, Adams County Deed Book 3-C, p. 313;

Harry J. Rosenthal and Cleo F. Rosenthal to Jefferson Davis Dickson, 2 December 1940, Adams County Deed Book 5-A, pp. 144-45 (includes plat);<sup>22</sup> and,

Louise Wedell Dickson, of New York, to D.A. Biglane, 26 May 1949, Adams County Deed Book 6-D, pp. 387-98.

This last deed includes both the Fort Rosalie museum and the gift shop parcels once owned by Jefferson Davis Dickson. It also references a change in the traffic pattern initiated by Dickson that closed part of Rosalie Street and diverted traffic across the southerly portion of the lot "over a course approximately 15 feet in width, from South Canal Street to the remaining portion of Rosalie Street..."<sup>23</sup> The conveyance was subject to an easement for the 15' connecting South Canal and Rosalie and subject to an agreement for the 25' allowed to the Bluff City Railway Company for ingress and egress.<sup>24</sup>

c. Occupants and Uses: Jefferson Davis Dickson bought the land and built the old fort as a tourist attraction in Natchez.<sup>25</sup> The 1941 city directory stated the Natchez Historical Association had done the restoration, while the R.F. Learned Lumber Company and a 1943 report in the *New York Times* noted Dickson's affiliation with the Natchez Historical Society. Promotional material, however, credited the Natchez Historical

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<sup>22</sup>Rosenthal received the lot through settlement of a court case and so the Chancery Clerk Walter Abbott transferred title to him by deed dated 11 August 1938. See Adams County Deed Book 4-W, 428.

<sup>23</sup>Adams County Deed Book, 6-D, 393, 397.

<sup>24</sup>The right of ingress and egress for the railway is covered in Adams County Deed Book 4-Z, 226.

<sup>25</sup>Before the restoration of Fort Rosalie, Dickson created a look-out at the Devil's Punch Bowl and spearheaded the investigation of the Natchez Indian mounds and something of a recreation of the Indian village called White Apple, a settlement located south of town. Unlike, the Rosalie site, Dickson leased the land of the White Apple Village. The White Apple Indian village was the site of the Natchez Indian settlement until it was destroyed by the French in 1729. Dickson's interpretation opened in September of 1940. "Restored White Apple Village Will Open Today," *Natchez Democrat* (28 September 1940), 8; "White Apple Village Is Open to Public," *Natchez Democrat* Sunday morning (29 September 1940), 1.

Association. Given the ambiguity, it is likely Dickson set up the association for his fort project.<sup>26</sup> The building, now home to *Fat Mama's Tamales*, initially was a gift shop.<sup>27</sup>

The 1941 city directory included Fort Rosalie and the White Apple Village in its list of historical attractions; the entry stated, "Fort Rosalie and White Apple Village, restored by the Natchez Historical Association, are open throughout the year." In the street-by-street catalogue, Fort Rosalie was located at 420 South Canal Street.<sup>28</sup> The Fort Rosalie site continued to be listed in the directories in the beginning sections about Natchez itself, promoting historic attractions and other points of interest.<sup>29</sup> In 1946 and 1947 the structure at 500 South Canal Street, more precisely at the corner of Canal and Orleans streets, was described as a gift shop.<sup>30</sup> In the 1947 edition, the directory cited

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<sup>26</sup>Adams County Deed Book, 5-A, 144-45; Adams County Deed Book 4-Z, 295-99; Adams County Chancery Court Records, Box 360, Case No. 11685, referencing Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Will Book 73 [or 75], 427; *State's Natchez, Mississippi, 1941, City Directory*, 7, 75, 264. (Library of Congress, microfilm); Learned Ledger 1938-1941, 358; Learned Journal 1938-1942, 267, 277, 297, 305; "Jeff Dickson Missing: Former Sports Promoter in Paris Was Air Force Captain," *New York Times* (25 July 1943): L, 27. Contemporary material promoting visitation at the fort cites the "Natchez Historical Association presents for your pleasure and education Fort Rosalie..." so it is likely the association was something Dickson set up to run the fort and the reference to the Historical Society is inaccurate. The present Natchez Historical Society was founded in 1958. Private Collection, Historic Natchez Foundation; Randolph Delehanty and Van Jones Martin, *Classic Natchez* (1996; reprint, Savannah: Martin-St. Martin Publishing Company, 2001), 45. The *Natchez Democrat* bears this hypothesis out; see "Replica of Fort Rosalie Will Be Opened to the Public on Next Sunday at Noon," *Natchez Democrat* (14 February 1941), 1, 9.

<sup>27</sup>Photograph, private collection, Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez; *State's Natchez, Mississippi, 1941, City Directory*; *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1946); and *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1947). (Library of Congress, microfilm)

<sup>28</sup>*State's Natchez, Mississippi, 1941, City Directory*, 7, 75, 264. (Library of Congress, microfilm).

<sup>29</sup>*Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1946), 12; *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1947), 20; *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1950), 19; *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1953), 24; *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1955), 24; *Polk's Natchez Directory of Householders ... 1957*, xxiii; *Polk's Natchez (Adams County, Mississippi) City Directory* (1958), xxiii; *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1960), 22. (Library of Congress, microfilm). Jack Elliott's interview with Sid Callon, Sr., as cited in Elliott's "The Fort of Natchez" suggests the fort as a tourist attraction closed upon the United States's entry into World War II. Elliott, 195-96, note 88. This would be consistent with Dickson's enlistment in the army and departure from Natchez.

<sup>30</sup>*Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1946), 303; *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1947), 124, 452. (Library of Congress, microfilm).

Mrs. Bernice Wright as the gift shop manager.<sup>31</sup> The old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop must have folded shortly thereafter as the building is vacant by the time of the 1951 directory.<sup>32</sup> It remained unoccupied until the mid-1950s. Vacancy again characterized the site at various intervals during the 1960s and in 1973.<sup>33</sup>

Additional city directory entries show that the building once again became a gift shop, home to the Serendipity Gift Shop from 1970 to 1972, to the Log Cabin, an arts and crafts shop, from 1974 to 1975, and finally, to the Lollipop Shop, another arts and crafts venue in 1976 and 1977.<sup>34</sup> It was used twice for religious purposes, once as a mission of the First Baptist Church sometime around 1955 or 1956 to 1960 and later, beginning in the late 1970s to around 1988, as the Lighthouse Baptist Church.<sup>35</sup> In the 1957 city

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<sup>31</sup>*Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1947), 124. In this edition, on page 491 in the street-by-street listing, Cleo Rosenthal and the Fort Rosalie Gift Shop are noted at 500 South Canal. John C. Stewart occupied No. 502. On the updated 1925 Sanborn map, the gift shop is noted at 500 South Canal and so, too, is the adjacent duplex. The address for the duplex was "A 500 B" and for the gift shop "500 C" South Canal Street. That the two buildings share a street address offers an explanation for the *City Directory's* listing. Sanborn Map Company, June 1925/August 1950, sheet 23.

<sup>32</sup>*Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1951), 642; *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1953), 634; and *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1955), 605. The Historic Structure Report (HSR hereafter) states the period of vacancy began in 1949. (p. 19). This is likely due to the sale of the property by Dickson's widow. Moreover, maps for the city of Natchez, including those produced by the City's Planning Commission, do not mark old Fort Rosalie or the gift shop as tourist attraction or historic site. Only the souvenir map, with sketches of Natchez's significant places correctly pinpointing their locations in town, had a drawing of Fort Rosalie. Here it was a rectangular palisaded enclosure with an observation tower inside. Rosalie the house was noted in every example viewed. If the gift shop were still operating and the fort still an attraction, then the Planning Commission would likely have referenced them. Maps, City of Natchez 1949-1962, Library of Congress. Tommy Jones, "Natchez Historical Park, Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop, Historic Structure Report," (Atlanta: Southeast Regional Office, National Park Service, June 2006).

<sup>33</sup>HSR, 20.

<sup>34</sup>HSR, 19-20. Sources for the HSR include city directories available in Natchez, and not yet included in the Library of Congress collection of microfilm. Likely these resources are accessible at the public library or the Historic Natchez Foundation or both.

<sup>35</sup>*Polk's Natchez Directory of Householders ... 1957*, 28, 482; *Polk's Natchez (Adams County, Mississippi) City Directory*. (Richmond: R.L. Polk and Co., Publishers, 1958), xxiii, 639; *Polk's Natchez (Adams County, Mississippi) City Directory* (1960), 22. (Library of Congress, microfilm). One of the beneficiaries of Denton A. Biglane's 1983 will, moreover, was the First Baptist Church. As a supporter of the church, use of the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop as a mission is not only plausible but also provides a reason for locating the outpost there. Adams County Will Book 50, 364-84. Perhaps records in the parish

directory, the Reverend Dewey T. Myles, Jr., was recorded as having a connection to the church mission at 500 South Canal.<sup>36</sup> In the mid-1960s, the Redwing Petroleum Company installed offices in the structure.<sup>37</sup> In recent memory, however, it is the margarita and tamale restaurant, *Fat Mama's Tamales*, that most associate with the premises. The former gift shop was retrofitted for the restaurant in the summer of 1989. Although far different than Dickson's vision of a tourist attraction, the restaurant is a popular venue for those visiting Natchez. It serves up foodstuff associated with the southwest today, indeed tamales were a Mexican import, in a structure most connect albeit somewhat hazily with pioneer settlements in the west, particularly those established after the push over the Appalachians and settlement in the southwest (Alabama, Mississippi) began in earnest.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The lumber used in the construction of the gift shop and other buildings of Jefferson Davis Dickson's "Fort Rosalie" came from a local sawmill, the R.F. Learned Lumber Company, the successor to the Andrew Brown Lumber Company of Natchez. Notations in the ledgers and journal for the years 1938 to 1945 record purchases beginning in October of 1940 through February of 1941 by Jeff Dixon [sic] and the Natchez Historical Society.<sup>38</sup> The account was paid up in May.<sup>39</sup> The time books also list who was working for the lumber company when Dickson placed his order, but do not record which of the 70-odd employees cut the timber for him.<sup>40</sup>

It was suggested that the fort was built by the Works Projects Administration, but no project information for Fort Rosalie was discovered in the records of the WPA for the state of Mississippi.<sup>41</sup> It is likely the WPA association with Fort Rosalie was merely a

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of the First Baptist Church will yield more information.

<sup>36</sup>*Polk's Natchez Directory of Householders ... 1957*, 28, 482. (Library of Congress, microfilm).

<sup>37</sup>HSR, 20.

<sup>38</sup>Learned Ledger No. 28, 1 September 1924-20 November 1945; Learned Ledger 1938-1941, 358; Learned Journal July 1938-July 1942, 267, 277, 291, 305. Andrew Brown and Son/R.F. Learned Lumber Company, Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi.

<sup>39</sup>Learned Ledger, 1938-1941, 358.

<sup>40</sup>Learned Time Book, December 1939-December 1941.

<sup>41</sup>State-wide WPA projects were conducted in Mississippi. These included the plant and animal surveys, historical records survey, clay and mineral survey, forest and park survey, veterans' grave registration, school lunch program, sewing projects, recreation projects, adult education, library extensions, Mississippi writing project, and copying of the Chancery Court Records. Presentations of some WPA work were made during May of 1940 in hopes the programs could be continued. "WPA

reference to the time period in which it was erected and to its appearance.<sup>42</sup> The WPA was active in Natchez, even as late as 1940-41 when Dickson was there, and the newspaper chronicled work on Choctaw as well as various state-wide projects.<sup>43</sup>

5. Original plans and construction: Early editions of the *Natchez Democrat* discuss Jefferson Davis Dickson's plans for the reconstruction, or ideas rather, and reference blueprints by John Sloan. Yet no specific drawings for the project are known to be extant.<sup>44</sup>

6. Alterations and additions: The most obvious, and recent, changes to the building include those for retrofitting the structure for a restaurant. The kitchen and bar area partitions were inserted in the north pen, for example, and new floor coverings were laid down over the wood. Similarly, plywood and fiberboard cover parts of the walls and ceilings in the restaurant and storage area. The fenestration initially was limited to four, top-hinged or awning windows each glazed with six-over-six lights, plus the two, smaller double-hung sash windows each glazed with four-over-four lights cut into the northwest wall of the south pen. Alterations and additions to these include the boarding up of three openings along the northwest (rear) elevation, the addition of another window opening to the east of the front door, and changes to the glazing within all but the eastern-most window in the front facade.<sup>45</sup> The wood shingle roof was replaced with standing seam metal, the decking (1"x 4" boards spaced 8" to 10" apart) beneath is likely original.<sup>46</sup>

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banquet to be Held Monday," *Natchez Democrat* (19 May 1940); "Style Show Was Very Enjoyable," *Natchez Democrat* (24 May 1940); "WPA Projects Have Successful Week," *Natchez Democrat* (26 May 1940). In Natchez, funds were secured for the city's auditorium. It was constructed in 1938-39. Kathleen Jenkins to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, 28 August 2006; Mary W. Miller to Virginia B. Price, electronic Communication, 28 August 2006.

<sup>42</sup>Further examination of the newspapers for the latter half of 1940 should clarify this point.

<sup>43</sup>See, for example, "Choctaw to be Open to Public," *Natchez Democrat* (31 January 1941), 5.

<sup>44</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (24 January 1940), 8; *Natchez Democrat* (5 April 1940); *Natchez Democrat* (10 May 1940), 12; "Moonlight Miracle Promised In Resurrection of Ft. Rosalie," *Natchez Democrat* Sunday morning (8 December 1940), 1.

<sup>45</sup>In an interview with the Gammils, Tommy Jones learned they installed the window as part of the 1989 renovation for *Fat Mama's Tamales*. HSR, 29.

<sup>46</sup>Various photographs, private collection, Historic Natchez Foundation. Regarding the integrity of the decking and its probable use as lath, see HSR, 28.

## B. Historical Context

Home to a popular local restaurant that serves a Mississippi Delta mainstay, hot tamales, along with libations refreshing enough to match Pierre Mille's description of those he found at the Coloniale Exposition in 1931 Paris, "Tired, we sit down in front of the Martinique pavilion. They mix there cold punches of a taste infinitely superior to the brutal cocktails of Anglo-Saxon America."<sup>47</sup> Hot tamales, generally a foodstuff associated with Mexico and Latin America, have been a staple in the Delta throughout the twentieth century, sold by street vendors and restaurants for as long as anyone alive today can remember. Tamales consist of cornmeal, pork or beef, and spices steamed in a corn husk or filter. Recipes, of course, vary from kitchen to kitchen and evolve over time, keeping the tamale a culinary constant in the modern South.

So much so that the Southern Foodways Alliance honored the hot tamale with an oral history documentary project that both captures the history of the makers and of food and promotes a brand of heritage tourism marketed to the gastronomically inspired. In Natchez, two restaurants serve hot tamales: Fat Mama's and the Donut Shop. Neither is included in the Alliance's Hot Tamale Trail covering tamale venues from Tunica to Vicksburg. This is because Natchez is not situated within the Mississippi Delta, so falls outside the Southern Foodways project boundaries. Both of the restaurants, however, are mentioned in connection to the study. According to Southern Foodways conversations with the Gammils, who operate Fat Mama's, the tamales are made in Texas according to their own, private recipe.<sup>48</sup> Judging by the business's success and the outcry to keep the restaurant in Natchez, not only are the hot tamales good, but they have become an example of culinary regionalism and the tourism economy.

In a discussion of "roadside indigestion," it has been said, cheekily, that the South was trying to win the war by "poisoning the North" with their food. But colorful restaurants

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<sup>47</sup>Morton, *Eating Architecture*, 56, note 6. Cites: Pierre Mille, "A l'Exposition Coloniale: Vue d'ensemble," *La Revue des Deux Mondes* 101 (May 15, 1931): 284.

<sup>48</sup>Amy Evans, Oral Historian, Southern Foodways Alliance, to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, July 2006; John T. Edge, Southern Foodways Alliance, to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, 6 July 2006; [www.tamaletrail.com/beyond\\_the\\_bounds.shtml](http://www.tamaletrail.com/beyond_the_bounds.shtml); see also, John T. Edge, "Hot Tamales and the Mississippi Delta," on the SFA website; "SFA Invites Tamale Lovers to Hit the Trail in Delta," *Inside Ole Miss* (3 April 2006). The Southern Foodways Alliance is motivated in part by a desire to celebrate and honor the diverse culinary traditions of the American South and by the hope of coming to a common table that concerns about racial, ethnic, and gender issues can be overcome. Evans's interviews, moreover, with *Doe's Eat Place* in Greenville won the Elbert R. Hilliard Oral History Award.

contribute to the “opportunistic character of the American roadside.”<sup>49</sup> On a main - but local - thoroughfare and operating in a distinctive building type, Dickson’s gift shop of the 1940s and the Gammils’ *Fat Mama’s* of the 1990s and today exist in a somewhat early example of roadside architecture conspicuously designed to attract passers-by. Dickson knew public relations and how to promote an enterprise, and his historical recreation was intended to solicit attention and tourist dollars. What set his log cabin apart from the more commercial roadside venues was its historical import. Removed from this context, the log cabin lends the restaurant an aura of timelessness - a beloved vernacular building form that is ageless and aged at once, in which a long-time, also well-loved, staple the hot tamale is served.

Hot tamales most likely were not part of the Coloniale Exposition of 1931 that highlighted both the architecture and the cuisine of France’s colonial territories. The presentation of the food, its flavors, smells, and sights, alongside the music and dance of the creole cultures was more successful than the built environment the French architects’ imagined and constructed to represent native cultures. This was largely because the greater fluidity people - with their cooking preferences, musical abilities, and dancing skills - moved within the colonial system as juxtaposed against the dominance of the Beaux Arts building tradition that dictated taste and inferred a hierarchal social order based on mastery of that architectural skill-set and etiquette. The hybrid dishes, such as gumbo, served at the Exposition attested to the diaspora occurring within the French imperial system - any colonial empire for that matter - that brought about measures of cultural exchange.<sup>50</sup>

The blending of food and architecture at the 1931 Exposition was intended to demonstrate the differences between the French and the colonials, highlighting the foreign-ness or alien nature of the other cultures, and overlooking the fusion cuisine offered to the fair goers in order to assert the superiority of France and western edifices over indigenous and huts.<sup>51</sup> Yet the overlap of food and architecture at the Exposition and elsewhere is a culture-producing process appropriating global meanings and values in a local context. This process has been

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<sup>49</sup>John A. Jackle and Keith A. Sculle, *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 3-37. It is likely the 2006 release, Claudette Stager and Martha Carver, eds. *Looking beyond the Highway: Dixie Roads and Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), will have more to say on the subject. The book is not yet available at the Library of Congress.

<sup>50</sup>Patricia Morton, “Consuming the Colonies,” in *Eating Architecture*, ed., Jamie Horwitz and Paulette Singley (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 56-64.

<sup>51</sup>Morton, 53.

capitalized on by those seeking to forge an economic identity or re-vitalization of a rural area through heritage tourism, including the culinary.<sup>52</sup>

The creator of the building in which Fat Mama's operates may not have been interested in serving food, but promoting the local culture of Natchez and its historic affiliation with France proper certainly was a stated goal. Jefferson Davis Dickson went so far as to assure the readers of the *Natchez Democrat* that the French ministry would be involved in the loan of objects for display and be present for the dedication ceremony.<sup>53</sup> His French connections, and marketing talents, were honed after serving with valor in the first World War.

Dickson stayed in Europe at the war's end, settling in Paris. Characterized as "the most colorful man about town," as well as restless, debonair, immaculate, and affluent, Dickson promoted sporting events and other amusements, including "concerts, prize fights, bullfights, hockey games, tennis matches, wrestling, bicycle races, animal shows and basketball games." In addition to operating the Palais des Sports in Paris, he ran the Salle Wagram, another arena, and publicized and marketed fights in Brussels on a monthly basis. Dickson worked events in most of Europe's large cities, but selected Paris and Belgium as his focus. In a show of gratitude, the French awarded him the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. Dickson was credited with making France conscious of professional athletics, particularly appealing to the young. His career included taking wartime photographs as well as staging lion fighting and bloodless bull fighting, among other stunts.<sup>54</sup> He was posthumously inducted into the Boxing Hall of Fame for his contributions to the sport.<sup>55</sup>

On 8 July 1939, Jeff Dickson married Louise Mastbaum, the daughter of the late Jules Mastbaum of Philadelphia, in Greenwich, Connecticut. Described as a "former Natchez Mississippi farm boy who became the boxing czar of Europe" Dickson operated the Palais des

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<sup>52</sup>Ferruccio Trabalzi, "Local Food Products, Architecture, and Territorial Identity," in *Eating Architecture*, 71, 86-87. See also, Paulette Singley and Jamie Horwitz, "Introduction," in *Eating Architecture*, 5-20.

<sup>53</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (24 January 1940), 8; *Natchez Democrat* (5 April 1940).

<sup>54</sup>"Ringmaster of Paris," clipping, n.d., private collection, Historic Natchez Foundation; "Captain Jeff Davis, Artist Barclay Lost: Noted Promoter of Sports Was In Europe Area," *Philadelphia Enquirer* (25 July 1943), A-1, 10.

<sup>55</sup><http://www.ibhof.com/dickson.htm>. The International Boxing Hall of Fame noted Dickson began promoting boxing events in 1924 and his association (ownership?) with the Palais de Sport in Paris.

Sports in Paris at the time; his wife was an heiress.<sup>56</sup> Her father donated one million dollars to the City of Philadelphia for the Rodin Museum; Louise and her mother Etta were in Paris restoring the Rodin Studio in Mastbaum's memory.<sup>57</sup>

With the Nazis' arrival in Paris, Dickson returned to the United States and shortly thereafter visited Natchez, where he was born.<sup>58</sup> He learned of the successful Pilgrimages, "amazed and delighted" by the event, commenting that the women had done for virtually nothing what would "have cost millions if deliberately planned."<sup>59</sup> Begun in 1932, the Natchez Pilgrimage was, in essence, a tour of the city's fine houses. The Pilgrimages were hosted by the Natchez Garden Club, organized in 1929. The garden club's establishment in 1929 followed on the heels of Charlie Compton's effort to save the city hall and open-air market from the wrecking ball four years earlier. Her preservation fight for the historic structure and market raised awareness of the import of Natchez's historic buildings; this cognizance was further heightened when the fledgling garden club hosted the 1931 annual convention. The attendees' interest in Natchez's historic fabric gave the club members the idea for sponsoring a springtime tour. The first Pilgrimage was a success. The money garnered through the Pilgrimage enabled the garden club to buy and restore the house on Ellicott Hill. This was only the beginning, for the garden club assisted in the restoration of other historic houses and prompted individuals to do so for once again ownership of these primarily antebellum-era buildings signified well-to-do social and economic status.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>*Philadelphia Enquirer* (10 July 1939), 2.

<sup>57</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (24 January 1940), 8.

<sup>58</sup>Dickson allegedly would describe how he did not have shoes until he was seven and sold newspapers to earn enough money to buy his first pair. See "Ringmaster of Paris," clipping, private collection, Historic Natchez Foundation. In the *Natchez Democrat*, his childhood home was listed as 306 N. Pearl Street. His mother died when he was ten years old; his father was a train operator and went to Jackson. Dickson left Natchez when he was seventeen, going to Atlanta to become a moving picture operator and cameraman. With the outbreak of the first world war, he enlisted and went to France. He received a number of medals and awards for his conduct during the war. *Natchez Democrat* (24 January 1940), 8.

<sup>59</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (24 January 1940), 8.

<sup>60</sup>Beha, 144-45, who cites Katherine Grafton Miller, *Natchez of Long Ago and the Pilgrimage* (Natchez: Rellimak Publishing Company, 1938), 23-38. The first Pilgrimage took place 28 March 1932 to 3 April 1932. Some 1500 people from thirty-seven states visited Natchez; they each paid two dollars for the tour. 2007 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Pilgrimages. James T. Coy, III, MD, Manager of Pilgrimage Tours, "A Trip Back in Time." ([www.natchezpilgrimage.com](http://www.natchezpilgrimage.com))

Moreover, the founding of the Natchez Trace Parkway in 1937 brought the preservation of historic resources in Natchez to a national level. The parkway, which commemorates an ancient trail, became a unit of the National Park Service the following year; it connects the southern part of the Mississippi River to the salt licks in central Tennessee, by way of Alabama.<sup>61</sup> These treasures in and around Natchez brought tourists to town, especially as the war cut into European travels in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Dickson, having left Paris, was particularly aware of the war and its effects. He turned his attentions to his hometown, historic Natchez, as someplace to promote, and let it be known that he desired his restorative work to be done in time for the Pilgrimages. Dickson had heard somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000 people attended the year before; these visitors were his potential audience. In January of 1940 he retained the option on three parcels of land. His plans for Natchez oscillated between restoring Fort Rosalie, or Fort McPherson which was a Civil War-era earthwork, or the Natchez Indian Village "as it was during the French period." In the conception phase of his project, Dickson reportedly "expect[ed] to make a dignified, bonafide shrine possessing educational value and international appeal. It shall not be exploited as a place to sell penny post cards, but will be a sort of memorial to French martyrs who planted the cross in the lower Mississippi Valley."<sup>62</sup> Instead, Dickson relied on the "historic features" to lure tourists to his Natchez attractions.<sup>63</sup>

Dickson decided to come to the next Pilgrimage to gauge the tourist trade for himself. At the same time, the bridge to Vidalia, Louisiana, was underway.<sup>64</sup> Transportation improvements, such as the bridge and the paving of Canal Street, coupled with President Roosevelt's encouragement of domestic travel over Europe because of safety concerns raised by the war, promised to bring more tourists to Natchez and to the Pilgrimages. Dickson contended that Natchez could be a cross-roads for American tourists and bet that the old French fort, Rosalie, would be an ideal draw.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>For more information about the Natchez Trace Parkway, see [www.nps.gov/natr](http://www.nps.gov/natr). The parkway stretches for 444 miles and was completed in 2005.

<sup>62</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (24 January 1940), 8.

<sup>63</sup>"Paris Promoter Boosts Natchez for Attractions: Dickson Says Historic Features Are Natural as Tourist Lure," clipping, n.d., private collection, Historic Natchez Foundation.

<sup>64</sup>Reports on the progress of the bridge appeared regularly in the *Natchez Democrat*. A special edition of the newspaper was printed in September of 1940 just prior to the opening ceremonies. See also, "Natchez and Vidalia Bridge Opened Thursday," *Natchez Democrat* (27 September 1940), 1.

<sup>65</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (24 January 1940), 8. Actually, Edith Wyatt Moore, who authored the write-up of Dickson, noted an "idea that means much to the future of Natchez ..." that Dickson wanted to

As a prelude to Fort Rosalie, Dickson developed two other historic sites as tourist attractions near Natchez. Dickson first opened an overlook into the Devil's Punch Bowl, which was a depression in the bluffs, a natural feature thought to be a hiding place for outlaws. Dickson advertised the Punch Bowl, emphasizing the romantic appeal of pirates as well as its proximity to town. The Punch Bowl was, after all, just four minutes from the Eola Hotel by car. This was his initial attempt to bolster tourism in Natchez.<sup>66</sup> Shortly afterwards, Dickson leased land to re-create the Natchez Native American tribe's White Apple Village, digging through the mounds in some cases.<sup>67</sup> The White Apple Village's opening coincided with that of the bridge, and its location on the "dual highway 61-65 at Beverly about ten miles south of Natchez [placed it] on one of the most beautiful and picturesque highways in the country [and one of the] most traveled tourist routes in the deep South." Dickson hoped that at White Apple Village "tourists [would] find an attraction that is unique, distinctive and different." He assembled relics. He enlisted the aid of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History who directed the archaeological work of Monroe Chambers and Emmett Chisum. Archaeology was on-going, Dickson anticipated another five years, but the excavations on the large mound were completed in time for opening day. The Village, as Dickson envisioned it, included a museum building made of brick masonry and the Indian mounds. Nominal admission fees were charged, although school children gained entry for free because of the site's educational value.<sup>68</sup>

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"restore some shrine that would benefit the entire community" and wanted to "make it a point of historic interest for tourists." In April, Dickson encouraged accommodating potential visitors to Natchez by having street markers among other things. At the month's end, the newspaper noted three new "welcome" signs on the highways that would extend gestures of friendliness. *Natchez Democrat* (5 April 1940); *Natchez Democrat* (30 April 1940). In May, the *Natchez Democrat* observed the garden clubs would endorse new sign projects. Purposeful catering to the tourism industry, and too the highway, had begun. Regarding the widening and paving of Canal Street, *Natchez Democrat* (6 June 1940).

<sup>66</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (22 March 1940). The Devil's Punch Bowl resembled the construction style of Fort Rosalie with its palisade and observation tower. The attraction was to open the following Monday. Although no notice was in Monday's newspaper, an advertisement for the site - a "Freak of Nature and Outlaw Rendez-vous" - was posted in the 31 March edition. Patrons were to step into their cars at the Eola Hotel and follow the "devil signs" and in four minutes would be driving through the entrance opposite National Cemetery. The advertisement cautioned "no climbing or hiking" and promised visitors they could walk into the Punch Bowl from the street level and into the observation tower. See also, "The Devil's Punch Bowl," brochure, n.d., private collection, Historic Natchez Foundation.

<sup>67</sup>Adams County Deed Book, 4-Z, 295-99; *Natchez Democrat* (10 May 1940).

<sup>68</sup>"Restored White Apple Village Will Open Today," *Natchez Democrat* (28 September 1940), 8; "White Apple Village Is Open to Public," *Natchez Democrat* Sunday morning (29 September 1940), 1.

He then turned to Fort Rosalie.<sup>69</sup> Beginning in May of 1940, Dickson began to purchase the property on which the fort had once stood. The *Natchez Democrat* stated that “splendid progress is being made toward getting this work [the restoration of Fort Rosalie] underway.”<sup>70</sup> Orders for lumber date the construction to the end of 1940 and into 1941.<sup>71</sup> Dickson’s fort was heralded as an “exact replica.” A newspaper story anticipating the opening of Fort Rosalie later that day boasted “all buildings and furnishings of the fort are authentic [...] historically correct in every [detail] even down to the pegs in [the wooden] chairs.”<sup>72</sup> The reconstructed fort included, according to its propaganda, stockades, an entrance building, storehouse, Catholic chapel, barracks and officers quarters, a Commander’s headquarters and bedroom, a Council room, powder magazine, observation tower, blacksmith shop, guard house, kitchen and mess hall, and parade grounds; the building under study here was the entrance and gift shop, though presumably not peddling “penny post cards.” The structure was perched on the intersection of South Canal and what is now D.A. Biglane Street so as to alert passers-by of the fort’s existence and be in-line with the automobile traffic.<sup>73</sup> The local press even highlighted its strategic location. Potential visitors were alerted to its whereabouts with the following description, both practical in its directions and enticing though the proffered view: “the entrance of Fort Rosalie is on Canal Street, it is between the antebellum mansion ‘Rosalie’, now a state shrine of the DAR and the Natchez Bridge. It commands a wonderful view of the Mississippi river and the mighty span of steel connecting Natchez and her neighbor, Vidalia.”<sup>74</sup>

Dickson and his wife did not settle in Natchez permanently and the interest generated by the fort likely diminished, without his promotional skills to sustain it, after the United States’s entry into the war in December of 1941. Dickson’s social calendar is recorded in excerpts in the

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<sup>69</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (5 April 1940). Dickson presented details of his plans for Fort Rosalie at a meeting of Jaycees. He wanted replicas of the original chapel, warehouse, and stockade at the fort and promised the project would be one “the people of Natchez would be proud of having in their city when it was completed.”

<sup>70</sup>Adams County Deed Book, 4-Z, 307; *Natchez Democrat* (10 May 1940).

<sup>71</sup>Learned Ledger No. 28, 1 September 1924-20 November 1945; Learned Ledger 1938-1941; Learned Journal July 1938-July 1942, 267, 277, 291, 305.

<sup>72</sup>“Fort Rosalie Restored by Jeff Dickson Will Be Formally Opened to Public Today,” clipping, n.d., private collection, Historic Natchez Foundation. Likely the authenticity descriptor did not extend to the modern captain’s chairs seen in the photographs or to the chandeliers.

<sup>73</sup>For more on the relationship between colonial architecture (American roots) and the automobile (present/future), Rhoads, “Roadside Colonial,” 133-52.

<sup>74</sup>“Replica of Fort Rosalie Will Be Opened to the Public on Next Sunday at Noon,” *Natchez Democrat* (14 February 1941), 1, 9.

*Natchez Democrat* and it is noted that he was staying at the Eola Hotel early in 1940. Later, he leased Rip-Rap. After spending several months in Natchez, Louise Dickson went to New York for the better part of the summer and wintered in Palm Beach with her family. Dickson joined her periodically.<sup>75</sup> Her absence from Natchez, wherein both Dicksons had been "delightful acquisitions to Natchez social circles," was explained in the accounts of the restored fort's opening. She gave birth their daughter, Christine Lee, on February 16<sup>th</sup>, the same day as the fort's inauguration.<sup>76</sup>

Dickson's place of residence is re-counted as Paris, New York, and Natchez. Dickson, ever restless, joined the army. He attended training in Miami and at Army Air Force Intelligence School in Harrisburg. Once his training was complete, he returned to Europe. Six months later, in July of 1943, he was reported missing. His wife received the news at the Waldorf Astoria in New York where she was living. She also spent time with her mother at the family's farm in New Hope. The *New York Herald Tribune* notice discussed his talents, commenting that Dickson enjoyed "almost a monopoly" on sporting events such as professional boxing, wrestling, ice hockey and that when the Nazis arrived and took over his arena he returned to his native Natchez to begin "the restoration of an old French fort and Indian Village... for the tourist trade."<sup>77</sup>

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The myth of the log cabin has its beginnings in the period around 1840 and was nurtured through the 1910s. Presidential hopefuls, eager to connect with the democratic, pioneers settling the west (today the mid-west and deep south), encouraged associations with humble origins and with the rough and tumble life of the frontier. Andrew Jackson, for example, fostered his military ethos and modest means with the log cabin "blockhouse" known today as the First Hermitage, when it actually was a

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<sup>75</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (20 July 1940), 5; *Natchez Democrat* (30 June 1940), 2; *Natchez Democrat* (12 September 1940), 7; "Jeff Dickson Is Back in Natchez," *Natchez Democrat* (10 January 1941), 2; *Natchez Democrat* (6 December 1940), 4; *Natchez Democrat* (11 February 1941), 5.

<sup>76</sup>*Natchez Democrat* (30 June 1940), 2; "Throngs Visited Fort Rosalie on Opening Sunday," *Natchez Democrat* (18 February 1941), 8.

<sup>77</sup>"Jeff Dickson Is Missing In Aerial Action: American Who Promoted Paris Sports Is Captain in Bombardier Squadron," *New York Herald Tribune* (25 July 1943), 7; "Jeff Dickson Missing: Former Sports Promoter in Paris Was Air Force Captain," *New York Times* (25 July 1943), L-27; "Captain Jeff Dickson, Artist Barclay Lost: Noted Promoter of Sports Was In Europe Area," *Philadelphia Enquirer* (25 July 1943), A-1, 10; Adams County Chancery Court Records, Box 360, Case No. 11685, referencing Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Will Book 73 [or 75], 427.

well-finished, two-story dwelling erected using horizontal log construction and not a defensive structure.<sup>78</sup>

Jackson's election in 1828 is associated with the rise of the common man over the Eastern elites that had dominated the political landscape since the American Revolution and with the extension of suffrage in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Perhaps an exaggeration to be tied solely to Jackson, the westward-shifting demographics did indeed widen the range of candidates running for office. The 1828 campaign marked a seminal point in the strategies used, including negative slogans, by political parties in an effort to get their man elected. In another example, the Whig party emphasized William Henry Harrison's war-time exploits over his Virginia Tidewater family in the 1840 campaign and with the slogan, "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." It was a conscious choice of the party, capitalizing on an opponents' charge that Harrison was too simple a man to be fit for office, one more at home in a log cabin. Afterwards, most candidates emphasized humble origins and qualities of the idealized, self-made man as a way to connect with the democratic populace they hoped to lead. Roosevelt's biographer quipped he was the only President born to wealth;<sup>79</sup> however, Theodore Roosevelt had the wartime experience of the "rough riders" on his side to mitigate charges of elitism.

Artifacts that illustrate this kind of appropriation of the past, and of the log cabin myth in particular, are perhaps best shown through the memorials and celebrations related to Abraham Lincoln's birthplace. Though born in a log cabin, the one on display is not his but rather is a dwelling representative of his home's modest material qualities. At the Tennessee Centennial in Nashville, it was said, "one log cabin was as good as another." By the time of the Centennial in Philadelphia (1876) and the World's Fair in Chicago (1893), the log cabin was firmly intertwined with the country's origin myth, not to mention its idea of the frontier, and a surprising number of people had been born in them.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Jillian E. Galle, "Finding Place, Making Space: Regional and Temporal Change in Slave Architecture of the American South," Paper, April 2004, Society of Architectural Historians Annual Meeting, Providence, Rhode Island. See also, "The Hermitage, West Cabin," Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.

<sup>79</sup>Edward Pessen, *The Log Cabin Myth: The Social Background of Presidents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 16-21, 81-85, 145-46, 155.

<sup>80</sup>Harold L. Shurtleff, *The Log Cabin Myth: A Study of the Early Dwellings of the English Colonists in North America* (Cambridge: 1939), 186-208, 214; Rodris Roth, "The New England, or 'Old Tyme' Kitchen Exhibit at Nineteenth-Century Fairs," in *Colonial Revival in America*, ed. Alan Axelrod (NY: W.W. Norton for The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1985), 159-83; Kammen, 31-32, 109, 128-29. See also, Joseph M. Wilson, *The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exposition 3*

During the late nineteenth century and dawn of the twentieth, the log cabin became a popular regional choice for practitioners of the Colonial Revival, an aesthetic characterizing domestic architecture primarily. Proponents of the Colonial Revival intended to evoke America's past as they saw it, the fondly remembered history colored by nostalgia in the wake of the Civil War. As an imagined or created identity, the Colonial Revival embodied "traditions developed within and tailored to the American environment."<sup>81</sup> It was a vision of America, partially shaped by white Protestant nationalistic sentiment and partially in reaction to industrialization that was changing the city-scape and who lived in it.<sup>82</sup> By the 1930s, Colonial Revival propagated a series of national images and simultaneously encouraged regional expressions in areas like the Gulf Coast, New Mexico, California, and the Pacific Northwest.<sup>83</sup> Such expressions were not intended to recall specific colonial monuments or buildings, but rather the idea of historic places so alongside the Georgian house was the "primitive shelter of the pioneer" in the colonial-inspired landscape. This primitive shelter, the log cabin, became an American symbol, one recognizable since the election of 1840 and, by the Colonial Revival epoch, one increasingly associated with the conquering of the west by the white man.<sup>84</sup>

The technology for actually raising a building with horizontal members was well suited to the vast open spaces and mature trees of the American colonies. Moreover the European emigres drew upon the architectural traditions known at home and so erected a variety of structures in wood shortly after their arrival. Knowledge of log construction, for example, came to the United States with the Swedes who settled in the Delaware Valley around 1638. The Germans, who populated parts of Pennsylvania, also invoked horizontal log construction, though differing from that of the Swedes' in that the notching

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vols. (Philadelphia: 1875); Thompson Westcott, *Centennial Portfolio* (Philadelphia: 1876). And, [www.nps.gov/abli](http://www.nps.gov/abli).

<sup>81</sup>Roger Stump, "The Dutch Colonial House and the Colonial Revival," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 1, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1981): 44.

<sup>82</sup>Stump, 51-54; William B. Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (December 1976): 239-54; Richard Guy Wilson, "Architecture and the Reinterpretation of the Past in the American Renaissance," *Winterthur Portfolio* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 77-86; and Woods, 81-83.

<sup>83</sup>David Gebhard, "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s," *Winterthur Portfolio* 22, nos. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1987): 134-40.

<sup>84</sup>Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism," 245; Shurtleff, 214.

was closer to the end of the log. This reduced the overhang and made for squarer corners.<sup>85</sup>

The distinction in horizontal log construction came primarily through the joinery employed at the corners. Some had corner posts; others a form of notching. Types of notching seen in the United States included saddle; v-notch, full and half dovetails, diamond, and square. Generally the use of notching dictated that the logs in each of the four walls be spaced in tiers alternating a half-thickness; corner posts or the use of false notching wherein the logs were connected with lap-joints or mortice and tenons allowed for even tiers of logs around the four walls. Saddle notches were the easiest to make and the choice for linking logs left in the round.

This methodology was adapted by the Scotch-Irish who transported the building formula down through Pennsylvania into the Valley of Virginia and beyond as the United States opened the trans-Appalachian territories (1790-1850). Found all-over the South, the log structure was most widely seen in the upland South and the predominant form of notching used was the half-dovetail. Deeper into the South, or rather the greater distance from the source, quality of construction dropped and, for instance, the use of the saddle notch became more common. Saddle notching, ubiquitous for outbuildings, as exported by the Pennsylvania Germans and Scotch-Irish had the cut only on the top or the bottom of the log; the Swedish version featured notches on the tops and bottoms.<sup>86</sup> The log cabin, small as it was, required a fair amount of lumber (eighty by one count) including the logs, roof structure, pegs, interior and door planks.<sup>87</sup> Some disparaged the cabin, describing it as crude without proper fenestration, ventilation or heat, in favor of the log-house. And while it is true quality ranged widely, buildings forged out of horizontal log construction not only distinguished rural society but were found in urban settings as well. They have

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<sup>85</sup>On the variance between Swedish and other horizontal log construction techniques, Kniffen and Glassie, 171-73.

<sup>86</sup>Fred B. Kniffen and Henry Glassie, "Building in Wood in the Eastern United States: A Time-Place Perspective." *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 167-81. This Scandinavian form of double notching served as the inspiration for the children's toy and for Hollywood, although in truth lingered only in the Upper Lakes states. Kniffen and Glassie, 172.

<sup>87</sup>Wayne D. Rasmussen, "Wood on the Farm," in *Material Culture of the Wooden Age*, ed. Brooke Hindle (Tarrytown, NY: Sleepy Hollow Press, 1981), 21-24; Rasmussen cites, W.G. Youngquist and H.O. Fleischer, *Wood in American Life 1776-2076* (Madison, WI: 1977), 28; and John R. Stigloe, *Common Landscape of America 1580 to 1845* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) 177-80. Stigloe states the log houses generally measured 30' x 20'; that building them was a community affair; that speed overrode quality; that they followed the dog trot plan and in southern "hollows" had porches.

been interpreted as examples of traditional expressions of space and structure, as communicated from one generation to the next rather than by way of literature or architectural contract.<sup>88</sup>

An exception can be found in French cultural strong-holds, like pockets of Louisiana. There, the wood building techniques of the French and of the Americans coming overland allowed for both traditions to continue, rather than one subsuming the other. The French continued to use piece-sur-piece, poteaux en terre, poteaux sur sole, and half-timbering while the Americans fashioned structures out of both horizontal logs as well as vertical framing.

It is out of this tradition, that of horizontal log construction and that of the idea of the log cabin, that Dickson's Fort Rosalie emerged architecturally. The extant structure, here occupied by *Fat Mama's Tamales*, is a recreation of an iconic architectural form. The log cabin emerged during the Colonial Revival era in places historically accurate and in places where someone thought a cabin should be. Dickson's log cabin entrance and gift shop draws on the traditional saddlebag floor plan and has a rectangular foot-print. Descriptions of the 1716-29 Fort Rosalie include defenses and buildings fashioned of wood; the gift shop was manufactured to resemble period structures made by horizontal log construction but was ultimately a lure for tourists situated away from the fort and on the roadway.

2. Condition of fabric: The building is in fair condition, although the wood is rotted in some places - notably in the foundation - and the roof sags and shows rust. Water appears to be the building's most obvious foe, damaging the fabric despite some stop-gap measures to redirect it such as the partial gutter over the entrance. There is also termite damage to the lower logs, particularly noticeable in the bottom three courses.

## B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop is rectangular in shape, measuring about 46' by 19', and stands one-story in height.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Warren E. Roberts, "The Tools Used in Building Log Houses in Indiana," in *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), pp. 182-203; Stigloe, 177-80. Stigloe cites Thaddeus Harris's 1805 *Journal of a Tour into the Territory Northwest of the Allegheny Mountains*.

<sup>89</sup>Glassie's study in the southern mountain region and Jordan's in Texas found two basic types: rectangular (more the 20' long) and essentially 16' square (akin to the 16' bay construction of English houses that gave rise to the "Virginia House" form); Morgan's in East Tennessee found variants on these dimensions. Regardless, Dickson's fort could be said to follow what was thought to be the dominant

2. Foundations: The original piers, supporting the sill plate, were located at the corners and most likely spaced at intervals beneath the structure; two of these remain in-situ on the southeast front. The foundations now consist of a log sill plate that is shored up in some places by masonry and rock piers as well as a logs of telephone pole or railroad tie quality shoved under the north, south, and east corners.

3. Walls: The walls are made of logs left in the round (up to 8" in diameter) rather than hewn or in-filled with chinking. Some are leveled or flattened a bit to sit more snugly with the adjacent members. At first glance, the construction and joinery resembles that of a child's "Lincoln Log" building set rather than true notching; however, that said, the ends of the logs only project 6" past the notch so are not overly exaggerated. Traditionally, notching form in the Upland South - including parts of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi - was thought to be related to timber type, but John Morgan's study of the *Log House in East Tennessee*, for example, found that cultural experience accounted for choices in notching as well as in size and floor plan of the cabins surveyed.<sup>90</sup> Notching attributed to Northern European sources include the V, full-dovetail, half, saddle, and diamond; other construction techniques brought over were the use of chinking, round logs, logs with two sides hewn, and a ridgepole/purlin roof structure.<sup>91</sup> Here, the walls consist of round logs and, at best, locked into place by what could only be called a reference to the saddle notching used for rudimentary or utilitarian structures.<sup>92</sup> The wood for the building is primarily pine.

4. Structural system, framing: The round logs are secured at the corners by notching and the hip roof supported by pole rafters (3" to 4" in diameter) placed 24" on center and nailed directly onto the top log (wall plate). The floor, discernable in places in the north

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type, though true to the more mythic understanding of log construction techniques and dimensions. John Morgan, *The Log House in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 20-33; Henry Glassie, "Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," in *The Study of American Folklore*, ed. Jan H. Brunvand (NY: Norton, 1968): 338-70; Terry G. Jordan, *Texas Log Buildings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978): 108-11; regarding the Virginia House, see Willie Graham, Carter Hudgins, Carl Lounsbury, Fraser Neiman, and Jim Whittenburg, "Inheritance, Adaptation, and Innovation: Building in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," Presentation, 25 April 2006, Colloquium, Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture (publication forthcoming in *W&M Quarterly*).

<sup>90</sup>Morgan, 108-09.

<sup>91</sup>Morgan, 1-18; Terry G. Jordan, *American Log Buildings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

<sup>92</sup>The preferred form of the saddle notch calls for the bottom of the log to be cut so that water can be repelled more effectively. Here, the notch is in the top of the log. HSR, 24-25.

end, consists of log joists serving as tie beams and sash sawn 2" x 4" lumber. Interior partitions in the south pen are crafted of traditional framing with wall studs, like those 2" x 4" joists employed for the ceilings, while those in the larger, north pen were installed for the restaurant.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads: The five steps leading up to the front entrance of the restaurant most likely are original features to the building.<sup>93</sup> Made of brick masonry construction, these are about 4' wide and are secured by two brick bulkheads that curve outward from the bottom two steps. There is a wood handrail anchored to a wood post positioned at the bottom of the stair run. East of the front entrance is a small rectangular landing or deck extending beneath the window opening and enclosed by a railing much like the handrail for the adjacent steps.

6. Chimneys: There is one chimney stack protruding above the ridgeline; it is made of brick masonry. A ventilation pipe also pokes up through the roof, to the rear. Inside, the chimneystack is corbeled. The firebox and oven both have a slight relieving arch. The entire masonry structure for the chimney is painted orange.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are two doorways into the building, approximately aligned to provide a center hall or cross axis for the building. Both are double doors, crafted of wood, painted dark green, and hung by butt hinges visible on the interior; strap hinges have been mounted on the exterior of each leaf to give the appearance of authenticity, or to invoke eighteenth-century technology and taste. Likewise, there is an ornamental handle, with a thumb-latch, once stained a dark color. Simple wood architraves surround all the openings making for plain casing commiserate with the log cabin finish. For the front entrance, 1" x 6" boards, painted dark green, suffice as the doorframe, including the jambs and head. Wire nails abound. The wood sill is unpainted and screwed into place.

Indicative of the structure's modern use, both the front and rear door openings contain signs alerting the patron where to enter and exit, place orders, and whether the restaurant is open or closed.

b. Windows and shutters: There are a total of nine window openings cut into the log frame of *Fat Mama's Tamales*. In the southeast facade, there are three: two are glazed with six lights each while the farthest east retained its sash and six-over-six light glazing. The southern-most window has a sign indicating where to park; the window just east of the door sports an air conditioning unit in lieu of its lower sash. There are window boxes

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<sup>93</sup>Photograph, Private Collection, Historic Natchez Foundation.

planted with flowers anchored to the east and south windows. To the northeast side, there is one window, glazed with nine lights, and lit by a "Miller Lite" sign. (Not to be outdone, a "Budweiser" sign radiates out from one of the front windows). In the rear, four windows once illuminated the interior spaces, but three have been closed or boarded up and exhibit mostly air conditioning and ventilation mechanics. One, to the north side of the doorway, has three vertical lights. This looks directly in to the counter. No windows were installed in the southwest end.

#### 8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The hip roof is supported by pole rafters nailed to the wall plate. It is covered in ribbed seam sheets (32" wide) of galvanized iron, probably painted brown at one time. There is a metal ridge cap running along the roof ridge and at the juncture of the hips, or where the sloping ends and sides of the roof meet.

b. Cornice, eaves: The roof and pole rafters project over the walls and corners, leaving the rafter tails exposed. The only gutter runs for almost 12' over the front entrance diverting water away from the doorway. Along the rear wall, a concrete trough installed at the drip-line acts as a French drain, directing the water run-off past the structure as best as possible.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: There are none present.

#### C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: In log construction, the typical house form throughout the south and west was a small, single pen heated by an exterior, end chimney. Pens, structural units made of four log walls joined together by corner notching, could be enlarged by attaching a second pen to the original, either abutting the chimney or adjoining the gable end opposite the chimney. The first transformed the chimney into a central stack and became known as a saddlebag plan. The saddlebag type is thought to be derived from English building tradition. The other two methods, building opposite the chimney, created the house forms known as the Cumberland and the Dogtrot, depending on whether a breeze-way was left between the pens or not. The construction of the second pen was either additive, shown usually through variances in wood and notching, or simultaneous to the erection of the first.<sup>94</sup> Here, the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop was constructed to resemble the two pen,

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<sup>94</sup>James R. O'Malley and John B. Rehder, "The Two-Story Log House in the Upland South," *Journal of Popular Culture* 11 (1978): 904-15; Terry G. Jordan and Matti Kaups, *American Backwoods Frontier: An Ethnic and Ecological Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989), 209; Morgan, 10-11, 30-32. See also, Fred Kniffen and Henry Glassie, "Building in Wood in the Eastern

saddlebag house type, with a smaller pen appended to the chimney- gable end (southwest elevation). In the north pen, a partition wall divides the interior space in half with the northeastern end reserved for the kitchen. The south pen, which is entered by way of a door adjacent to the firebox and chimneystack, contains a small vestibule from which open the bathroom and the storage room. Behind the restroom, and opening off the storage room, in the west corner of the building is a small, closet-like space with a cast-iron sink.

2. Stairways: There are no stairs.

3. Flooring: In the north pen, vestibule or hall, and bathroom, a new vinyl floorcover sheathes the original material. It is made to resemble wood floors. Preparations for the vinyl covering meant the floor level was elevated and so dry laid bricks were placed in the chimney hearth to level it with the new floor surface. In the south pen, a linoleum sheathes the original 3 1/4" tongue and groove flooring, except for a place in the west corner of the building.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls have been covered with plywood and painted yellow in the north pen or restaurant. The south pen, in which the partitions were erected with the building, features a variety of wall and ceiling finish. The store room exhibits a fiberboard wall and ceiling surface whereas the vestibule or hall and the west corner room have 7" tongue and groove boards composing the wall surfaces. The ceiling of the south pen vestibule features double-beaded, tongue and grooved together boards.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The door to the bathroom is a wood, single leaf door distinguished by two panels, one above and below the lock rail. It is hung from butt hinges and secured at one time by a Yale manufactured dead bolt lock. Presently a sliding bolt lock serves the purpose. The opening to the south pen from the north is closed off merely by a curtain. Another door, here a piece of plywood, hangs at the entrance to the storage area off the vestibule. It can be closed to divert patrons from non-public areas, just as access to the kitchen is blocked from patrons's view by the partition wall and double-acting doors reminiscent of those seen in saloons in the old westerns of Hollywood.

b. Windows and shutters: There are no interior shutters, although some of the windows are fitted with metal grilles.

6. Decorative features and trim: Decoration is limited to string lights, like those used for holiday lighting, some miscellaneous decorative objects such as a bull and matador, doll perched on the fireplace, artificial flowers, and some sign-age promoting various restaurant-related activities or specials. Structural ornament comes in the form of an ogee molding (2") used as a cornice in the south pen, the full-length shelf above the firebox and bake oven replacing an earlier, smaller mantel, and the unadorned, 1"x 6" wood boards installed as window casings.

7. Hardware: With the exception of the vestige of the strap hinges attached to the entrance doors, the hardware is a mixture of modern latches, sliding bolt locks - into the door head and sill of the exterior portals - and deadbolts, grilles, door knobs and strike plates. The origins of the andirons and trammel bar are unknown.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. HVAC: Although intended to invoke a feeling of colonial times, the fireplace and bake oven are not sources of heat for the restaurant. There are fire dogs and a trammel bar in the firebox, however. A gas pipe is also present, probably a connection for a stove or other source of heat at one time. There is a fan, for ventilation, on the northeast side. There are also air conditioning units in the windows.

b. Lighting: The restaurant lighting is utilitarian, from the exterior floodlights to the bare bulbs and fluorescent overhead lighting inside. There are some advertisement features, such as the "Budweiser" and "Miller Lite" signs illuminating the windows, as well.

c. Plumbing: The building has been connected to plumbing lines, most likely since the beginning because the water works company extended the water mains and hook-ups to South Canal Street in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, the cast-iron sink, now in a storage closet of sorts, is an original feature to the structure. The restaurant has kitchen and bathroom facilities on the premises.

9. Original furnishings: Furnishings consist primarily of the bar and some bar stools provided for the restaurant and its patrons inside, as well as some picnic tables and plastic tables and chairs for the patio. Objects dating to the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop period are in unknown locations at this writing, and not in-situ.

D. Site

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<sup>95</sup>Natchez Water Works, Service Permits/Plumber Reports 1904-06, George W. Armstrong Public Library.

1. Historic landscape design: The Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop faces southeast to Canal Street and occupies to corner lot, with D.A. Biglane Street running close to its northeast side.<sup>96</sup> Based on the 1946-50 update of the June of 1925 Sanborn mapping endeavor, the "Fort Rosalie Museum" consisted of eight additional buildings, loosely clustered in the middle of the property which stretched up and behind the lots abutting Canal Street and making the gift shop somewhat remote from the museum itself. All of the structures, but one, were single story buildings and made of wood, probably utilizing horizontal log construction.<sup>97</sup> The farthest from the gift shop, which was the point of entry, was a three-story observation tower.<sup>98</sup>

The town of Natchez has grown up and around the old fort museum, however the neighboring dwelling at 502 South Canal has disappeared. The 1990s parking lot between the gift shop (Fat Mama's) and the Stietenroth House at 504 South Canal took its place but it is unclear as to when the structure was removed. Tradition holds that Dickson had the house taken down to make room for parking so it is possible the cartographer for the Sanborn company neglected to delete the building, noted as a duplex, from the 1925 map he or she was updating between the mid-1940s and August of 1950. The 1946 *City Directory* supports this theory since the numbers jump from 500 to 504 South Canal Street.<sup>99</sup> Previous maps (1910, 1904, 1901) include what was 502 South Canal but as a single dwelling. Deeds for Dickson's property suggest Harry and Cleo Rosenthal lived in an adjacent structure and mark the property line 15' off the brick piers of their house

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<sup>96</sup>In the 1990s, D.A. Biglane Street was put in, reducing the lot size and eliminating the space for parking to the northeast of Fat Mama's. There is a low, reinforced concrete wall wrapping the east corner of the structure; this likely was added at the same time as the road. HSR, 21.

<sup>97</sup>Copies of photographs from a scrapbook belonging to Dickson's daughter would bear this hypothesis out. These depict buildings erected out of logs, similar to that seen in the gift shop. Private Collection, Historic Natchez Foundation.

<sup>98</sup>Sanborn Map Company, June 1925/August 1950, sheet 23 (Historic Natchez Foundation and Library of Congress). The 1925 map was updated in October of 1946 and the final, of August of 1950, replaced the earlier versions. This evolutionary process means the fort buildings should have been standing at least in 1946 when the updates began and quite possibly through August of 1950 when the revisions concluded. Without the paste-ups, what went when is not verifiable.

<sup>99</sup>Mary W. Miller to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, 20 July 2006.

foundation.<sup>100</sup> By the time of the alleged 1966 Sanborn map, the structure at 502 South Canal was gone.<sup>101</sup>

In recent years the restaurant operating out of the building has used a stone terrace, installed to the rear of the structure, for seating. The patio is set into the gently sloping hill rising up behind the building. The patio is accessible by way of a few steps up from the building and from the northeast street side. It is shaded by a large oak tree. The river, however, is not visible from this setting.

Rosalie, the house erected for Peter Little in the 1820s, stands nearby. The house has been owned, and operated as a museum, by the Mississippi State Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution since 1938. It occupies the block on Canal Street between Orleans and D.A. Biglane. Rosalie has been on tour during the Pilgrimages, as recently as this fall (2006). It was Dickson's tour of Rosalie that inspired him to resurrect the fort. Reportedly Rebecca Rumble showed him around the house and pointed out the flagpole, distant at the old fort site. Upon seeing it, Dickson snapped his fingers in a moment of inspiration and set about rebuilding the fort.<sup>102</sup>

2. Outbuildings: There are no outbuildings on the site.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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<sup>100</sup>Sanborn Map Company, 1910, sheet 24; Sanborn Map Company, 1904, sheet 16; Sanborn Map Company, September 1901, sheet 13. Actually the deed references the southwest property boundary as a line "15 feet northeasterly from the brick pillars now under a residence dwelling house" owned by Harry and Cleo Rosenthal. The language concerning the dwelling house changed slightly in 1949 to read, "owned (formerly) by Harry J. Rosenthal, and now known as 500 S. Canal Street, ...". Adams County Deed Book, 5-A, 144-45; Adams County Deed Book, 6-D, 390. Most likely this residence dwelling house was 504 South Canal Street, now known as the Stietenroth House. Confusing is the 1947 *City Directory* reference placing both the gift shop and Cleo Rosenthal at 500 South Canal. *Polk's Natchez City Directory* (1947), 491, but this could be that the two buildings briefly shared a street address as the Sanborn map indicated the duplex was located at 500 A & B South Canal Street, while the gift shop hovered on the corner at 500 C South Canal Street. Sanborn Map Company, June 1925/August 1950, sheet 23.

<sup>101</sup>The 1966 Sanborn Map is not in the collection at the Library of Congress or available through the map company website. For the reference to the map, and so to the *terminus post quem* date, HSR, 14, note 15, which cites the National Register nominations.

<sup>102</sup>"Fort Rosalie Restored by Jeff Dickson Will Be Formally Opened to Public Today," *Natchez Democrat* (16 February 1941), 3.

A. Architectural drawings

There are no architectural drawings known at this writing.

B. Early views

The Historic Natchez Foundation has copies of some of the scrapbooks belonging to Dickson's daughter, including images of the reconstructed fort. The Historical Society must retain some images; a sampling of the photographs once belonging to the Natchez Printing and Stationary Company was published in 2002 as *Natchez Images*. This book currently is offered for sale on the Society's website. The photographs from the Natchez Printing Collection include views of Dickson's Fort Rosalie attraction for two were included in the aforementioned publication. One was of the guardhouse and stockade. See p. 131.

C. Bibliography

1. Repositories Consulted

Adams County Courthouse, Natchez, MS

In the courthouse there are records for various transactions relating to the sale, lease, and purchase of property as well as the occasional plat map to accompany the deed; for wills; and, for the twentieth century, for land taxes.

George W. Armstrong Public Library, Natchez, MS

The public library has some un-catalogued primary source materials in a secure location on-site, as well as some of the city directories. Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century newspapers are available on microfilm.

Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, MS

Here the most valuable source of information were Ronald W. Miller and Mary W. Miller. In addition to the extensive knowledge the Millers have gained, and shared, there are some tangible items of interest including clippings and notes on Dickson and his activities, copies of family albums, city directories, and Sanborn maps. The foundation also has a library that would have been useful to peruse if time had permitted.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

For primary source material, the Library of Congress has, for example, microfilm copies of the Natchez City Directories, up to 1960, as well as various period newspapers from New York and Philadelphia and copies of the Sanborn maps.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS

Here there is a small file on the buildings within the old Fort Rosalie site, most likely similar or a copy of that produced during the National Register nomination process. The archives and library division also has land tax records for Adams County, but only for three years before 1900.

Further search of materials in Jackson could yield more information.

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD and Washington, D.C.

Records relating to the WPA are kept in College Park as are most still photographs, maps, and architectural drawings. While nothing specifically for the reconstruction of Fort Rosalie surfaced, some information regarding WPA-era programs in Natchez and in Mississippi exists. Old military records and legislative records are stored in the downtown branch. These, too, provided mostly tangential information to the decommissioning of the fort buildings and the transferral of the property into private ownership. More research time would be beneficial in both archive locations.

University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

Here reside the papers of the Andrew Brown Company/R.F. Learned Lumber Company. Also in the archives are articles, photographs, paper collections, and journals relating to Mississippi history and to Natchez in particular. The library also has some microfilm copies of local newspapers, including the *Natchez Democrat*, and copies of state documents and reports.

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#### D. Likely sources not yet investigated

Although deed research was completed to when the property was purchased by Jefferson Davis Dickson, further work remains to be done to trace the transfer of the old fort from the French to the U.S. government and then into private hands in the first decade of the nineteenth century. It would be expected that the fort site was platted, advertised for sale, and purchased by a number of individuals. It is also possible the newspaper published various schemes to promote the newly surveyed lots to its readership, once the Congressionally mandated, three-week public sale concluded. However, the land of the old fort is generally associated with Peter Little and his subsequent construction of Rosalie, so it is possible that when Little bought the tract(s) he got it all. South Canal Street, moreover, remained enough on the boundaries of town that it was not included in the Sanborn mapping endeavors of 1886, 1892, and 1897.

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop (*Fat Mama's Tamales*) was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) program, now within the Heritage Documentation Programs division of the National Park Service, at the behest of Natchez National Historical Park. Richard O'Connor is the Acting Manager of Heritage Documentation Programs. The project was sponsored by Natchez National Historical Park, Kathleen Jenkins, Acting Superintendent. Project planning was coordinated by Catherine C. Lavoie, Acting Chief, HABS, by Mark Schara, HABS Architect, and by Kathleen Jenkins. Field work was undertaken by Mark Schara, HABS architect and project supervisor, as well as by Noah Steffes (University of Michigan) and Fred L. Decker, Jr. (Drury University), architectural technicians. The drawings were produced by Fred L. Decker, Jr., Mark Schara, and Noah Steffes. Field work for the large format photography was undertaken by James Rosenthal, HABS photographer, in July of 2006. The project historian was Virginia B. Price.

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